



# *Aubade*

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Aubade 1999



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## *Lucy's*

The bar's a straight up  
Juke joint dive  
With license plate walls  
And intermittent Christmas lights.  
Smoky and dim,  
Highlighted with steady flashes  
Of green and red  
Zippo orange,  
Butane blue,  
And the gold flecks  
Of goldenschlager.  
A rowdy crowd hollers  
As it life's the miracle  
Of intoxication  
And the waitresses,  
Darlas and Mary Sues,  
Keep the pitchers full  
And the wings hot  
With warm whispers  
Of "Hey there, Sweeties"  
And "Sugar Pies"  
As they jiggle  
Their well worked thighs.

But removed for that sweaty heap  
And into the band  
Is this guy at the back wall  
Undisturbed by those undeterred  
By the bar top's last call.  
He wears socks and sandals.  
Bermuda shorts,  
And a tank top  
With a faded print.

Five o'clock shadow  
and 12 o'clock hair.

Delta blues  
Draw a collective groove  
And that guy in the back,  
His head bobs like a dashboard ornament,  
His fingers snap,  
He lurches front to back  
To a sweet E beat.

Bouncer,  
Ask that man  
If he could please leave.

*Ty Bowers*



"Fairy Ring"

Black & White Photo

Cynthia Lotze

# Chandler's Blue Tulip

is now duct-taped to the wall in my bedroom,  
as she let me take it back so I wouldn't miss her.  
It's a blue that is actually just white paper reinvented by  
bright watery swirls of her little messy hands,  
but this is not to deny its subtlety  
besides, the stem is dull green construction paper.

Lying in bed among bouncy candlelight shadows  
you venture to say the two paper cutouts of hands  
which make up the leaves resemble your own,  
as if creating the blue jagged head  
like shadows atop shadows  
like playful hands biding time in empty spaces

like me that hot afternoon  
as we stopped on the corner of Kenmore and Monroe  
was it for those yellow-red tulips  
or was it just that low brick wall  
low enough to sit on so you could read the chapter  
for class that you hadn't read,  
and wouldn't be able to read on time,  
and so I sat some distance down the brick and  
in between mutual efforts at interrupting one another,  
composed a list of things we'd seen,  
things we hadn't,  
and took advantage of reflected light not cast  
in crude finger shapes of self-amusement.

Must I actually choose which I prefer:  
the perfectly reddish tulips in the corner of that yard;  
yours, imagined in some dim afterglow; or her sweet  
paper blue on the wall,  
name and dated: Chandler, May '98

*Sarah McCall*



## *Letter to A.*

We were not a unit.  
We were not permanent—but  
—more like a butterscotch candy  
that you hold in your mouth after eating lots of Altoids  
so it tastes kind of weird.  
So anyway we glanced carelessly a couple times  
at next to each other  
and you smiled a fuzzy smile  
and goosebumps popped out of my skin  
like prairie dogs—  
ever polite you asked if i would mind  
if you smoked  
and small white hands  
carefully fingered the cigarettes  
one by one—  
painting smoke trickles in the air in  
precise Chinese teacup strokes.

My guard was going up and down  
like an elevator and my  
smile was porcelain cracking as we  
lay on the bed  
side by side  
like two cigarettes—  
everything got paler and paler.  
We were slowly fading  
under the wash poured on the easel.  
I was all prairie dog and

hardly any blood.  
odd—that—  
i don't remember  
any of our conversations—  
which must have trickled into the air  
as we smoked each other away, and that  
i wrote this at all  
when  
i know that i don't care  
and i know that you don't care  
(and surely no one else will care)  
about cigarette-paper-wrapped things  
that happened  
before i was me.

*Meg Weireter*



Untitled

Ink on Paper

Erika Meredith

# Kinetic

I left on your arm.  
My sobriety played navigator  
through a cosmos of elbows,  
and a firestorm of drunken barstools.  
Your sure hand like a rudder steered  
intoxication, charted movements  
by the night sky as we embarked on a maiden voyage.

My engines flood.  
Inundate deltas—our bodies, your bed;  
it's a barge of consequence.  
We idle on this platform for days:  
bounce around like spacemen,  
drive lunar cruisers with monster-truck wheels  
and digging threads,  
set off rockets that fishtail my spine—until;  
the pull of gravity or tides release me.  
And dewy tire tracks mark our sweet awakening.

Somewhere between dawn and morning  
I will sleep. Dream of the next five hundred years  
and what advancements will be made  
in space travel. The horse and cart,  
the motor car,  
the raft and ocean liner.  
Jetsonian rockets.  
You will always be the only vehicle that moves me.

*Laura Varlas*

# College Life (or Zip Zang Zoom)

## In six parts

- I. "foot reflex action"  
sittin in my room,  
room of doom,  
yup  
it's a room of doom.
- II. "devil"  
i am the devil  
of that light  
at the corner of william and princess anne
- III. "dawson's creek"  
DAWSON!
- IV. "eagles nest"  
sometimes I wish  
I could smell  
my armpit  
(up close)
- V. "luke perry"  
he's so hot,  
i am not  
luke perry;  
he is lean,  
he is mean  
on my heart,  
luke perry.  
groin.
- VI. "classical music makes me vomit"  
classical music makes me vomit.  
No, not really  
(i actually kind of like it)

*Adam Berenbak*



"Self Surreal 77"

Graphite on Paper

Michael McMahon

# Saturday

Our eyes were searchlights that Saturday,  
your glow like sunlight & I singing  
along to some 80s number,  
trying to dance, my smile a watermelon.  
*Just breathe. Music moves your blood.*  
Finally something sultry  
crept into the speakers, & I bowed,  
begging a dance. You asked if He would mind.  
I asked if She. So we didn't answer  
& gave arms, & our hair stood on end.

The music didn't love us, though. So we found  
a bus, & were silent, our breath simulating sleep.  
Selene was beginning her farewell address  
& our eyes weighed us down.  
You offered yourself as a pillow,  
but when I looked up all I could see  
was Her. So I wrapped a smile, gave  
it to you, & tilted backward my seat.

Movement rolled the scenery. I said  
something about love & there She was again,  
explosions of your eye. You turned words inside out & asked of Him.  
(We don't use names; those make Them real.)  
I told you I was waiting. For a break,  
a moment, a lifetime. I'd wait  
years for a five-minute thrill.

When all was sleep, we arose & trailed  
string through the maze of sidewalk.  
If we got lost, we would never fly out,  
or like Icarus, we'd find flight fateful.  
We played the pronoun game, discussing  
Us, & She, & Him. Now we really danced,  
but eyes were deceitful. They were chained.  
I wanted to say *I know*,

*me too.* But I didn't. I just smiled.  
The stars had us spoken for.

We found a concrete place stained  
with orange lamp light. I sat,  
crossed my legs, dress obscenely  
short on my right thigh. We spoke  
in past & future tense. They polluted  
our conversation thought, so instead  
of speech, we dashed  
through artificial rain & made  
sand castles from our word.  
I got my feet wet in the man-made lake,  
you followed. The sign said no  
swimming, but the water begged me to  
heap clothes together & disobey  
everything that bound my life: signs,  
strings, solitude, sex. Instead I asked you  
if you liked where you stood.  
You didn't answer. I didn't offer.

Time took us away from Saturday.  
It returned us, checked us back into  
Routine. the fantasy was repainted  
into fiction, a moment of energy, sleep-laden  
bodies, starving.  
But we're full now. With He & She,  
& wait, & memory. Full to our  
watermelon smiles.

Our eyes, still searching,  
our hair still on end.

*Erin Smith*

## *southern hospitality*

so i say to myself  
i sure do like that easy going smile of yours  
and how the dust just clings to every inch of your work worn body  
the casual way you say "you know i love you, baby"  
while you eyes flicker mischievously like the flirt  
your non debutante mama taught you to be  
and while you light that cigarette  
leaving it dangling in those sculpted lips of yours  
i swear to myself i'm leaving you  
cuz that southern drawl which you whisper  
sweet nothings to me with is slowly losing its appeal  
and i can only take so much of this land of civil politeness  
honey your southern hospitality is just as sweet as candy  
and everybody knows that sugar simply  
dissolves

*Shannon Carnemolla*



"The 42nd Psalm"    Acrylic on Paper    William Hartland



# Familiar Discontent

"I had no business raising children"  
says my father as we huddle indoors.  
It will drop to 20 degrees tonight he tells me.  
First signs of winter, first signs of  
his disappointment.

Gray hair, heavy middle,  
he just turned 46.  
We both stare outside, waiting  
for the younger 2 to get home.  
It's dark and cold.

Immediately I want to tell him the truth.  
That his music still makes me move,  
I still dance in my yellow dress to the blues.  
And I'll keep searching for comfort;  
I'm moving south.

I've saved all of his letters:  
About his scarce dinners at Robinhood Apartments.  
To remember, as Henry Miller said,  
"always be merry and bright"  
Be focused. Be thrifty. Be good.

I shiver next to the icy window.  
"We gotta get you a winter coat,"  
he reminds me—  
Then he pulls me tight.  
"I just want you to be warm baby, that's all."

*Colleen Blue*

# The Legend of Clippy the Squirrel: A True Story

*James Mirabello*

Listen well, friend. I see that you are new to this neighborhood, and I can sense your naiveté. Allow me to remedy that failing. Hear me! There is much treachery and adventure in the frolicking backyards of these suburbs. Be not fooled. They are a wilderness of wonder, and it is these suburbs where my story is set.

I will tell you the tale of a woodland creature, one who surpassed all the limits of his species. I speak of a single squirrel who challenged our thinking and made us see nature in a new light. You cannot live on this block until you hear this tale so pay attention. I will tell you the legend of Clippy the Squirrel.

No one knows from where this squirrel came. Of his birth and early life, I know nothing. But when he arrived at the backyard of my father, Robert, immediately humans could tell that this squirrel was different. He was larger than the average squirrel, though not by much. His body was sleek, but powerful. You could see his muscles working like an engine underneath his gray coat. Behind his eyes was intelligence, and that's what was most interesting. In general, when a man walks close by, all squirrels scurry off to the safety of their trees. This particular squirrel would back off a bit, but then sat...and watched...Yes, those were the eyes of an observer. He watched.

His most noticeable feature was a cut in his ear. It was almost as if someone had snipped at the squirrel with scissors for halfway up, the ear diverged into two little branches split at the middle. Robert Mirabello said this was a clip in his ear and dubbed him 'Clippy.'

There was peace in the land at this time. For years, man had put birdfeeders in their backyards. These feeders proved an impossible temptation to the squirrels who constantly frightened the birds and attacked the feeders. This was, a familiar was in suburbs around the world, continued for a long time. But, man was more clever than beast. Man hung their birdfeeders in places where the ravenous squirrels could not get at them. For example, my father had a great lattice fence on one side of his deck. The ancient dwellers of this house had wanted to build the lattice fence all around the deck, but only finished the one side. Now, the wood was old and rotting, the gray brown underneath overwhelming the last vestiges of the blue paint. Robert Mirabello used this ancient structure, which extended eight feet into the sky, as a defensive tool, and he hung the birdfeeder from the top of this fence. And that brought the peace to the Mirabello backyard. It lasted for many years.

In these years, the squirrels had to content themselves with nuts and whatever

se they could find. But, they would look up and see that great birdfeeder and its  
ock of wonderful seeds. Many tried to climb that lattice work, but all failed. The  
rdfeeder became a dream, an impossibility, a sword in the stone.

And unto this sad peace came Clippy, with his sleek gray coat and his knowing  
es. He tried to climb the lattice work and like all the others, he fell with a forceful  
ud on to the deck. But, unlike others, he did not give up. The rogue's advantage  
as always his intelligence and his observations. And he saw a tree branch extending  
ver the top of the lattice work.

Robert Mirabello was walking to the backyard one day when he looked up and  
w the rogue squirrel hopping from the branch onto the lattice fence. The squirrel  
en trotted over to the birdfeeder and ate to his content. He stood there, eight feet up,  
champion, a conqueror, his clipped ear flapping in the wind. And the war began.

My father was a professor of defensive military strategy, and these skills were  
aid him verily. His first attempt to defeat Clippy was simple enough. He took a  
pe and hung the feeder a foot from the top of the lattice fence. The rogue easily  
astered this. He crawled to the edge of the lattice work, planted his feet firmly into  
e corner, and flipped backwards. When the Mirabellos discovered Clippy, he was  
anging upside down from the top of the fence, reaching down and eating seeds. He  
so was knocking food down to the deck where a legion of anxious squirrels awaited.

Mirabello next built a long, narrow metal plank which he attached to me end of  
e fence. He hung the feeder from that. The ploy was brilliant. The metal plank was  
o narrow for the rogue to hang upside down from, and he wouldn't be able to grip  
e strong metal.

The scheme may have been canny, but Clippy was too sly. He nudged himself  
refully across the metal plank, and sacrificing his body, threw himself over the edge.  
n the way down, he rammed into the feeder, knocking the whole structure down with  
m. Then, he and all the squirrels would eat until they could eat no longer. And they  
joiced.

For years, the battle raged. Like a modern day Robin Hood or Owen  
endower, Clippy the Squirrel would break through every trap that was set, every  
uzzle that he was presented with. His magnificent gymnastic abilities also served  
m well throughout the war. This skill went beyond hanging upside down or falling  
rposefully eight feet in order to feed his brethren. Clippy could leap farther and  
gher than other squirrels. He had quicker reflexes as well. (These skills particularly  
oved vital when Jon Clough, friend of the Mirabello family, scout and squirrel  
nter, tried his luck against the rogue. But, that is a story unto itself.) But, what man  
ared most was Clippy's intelligence. He would be eating on the deck and suddenly  
chased away by angered children. The children would pursue him into the back-  
rd and smile for their victory, turn around to go back in the house, and see him  
ere, eating on the deck again!

The battle raged, the two sworn enemies, the rogue squirrel Clippy and Robert Mirabello. The battle grew famous, and it was at this time that I first heard of it. The war was raging and man was losing. Losing to the intelligence of a simple squirrel. Clippy was single-handedly making a case for evolution.

The years passed and the two enemies grew old and tired. My father had tried every defensive trick he could think of including hanging the feeder on a line that ran from the gutter to a tree. However, Clippy jumped from the house, knocked the feeder down, and somehow landed gracefully on the tree. But, as Mirabello's ideas ran out, so did Clippy stop coming to thwart these ideas. The squirrel disappeared. No one knows where it went. Peace returned.

A year later, Robert Mirabello threw a piece of bread out for the birds, as is a usual custom. This piece of bread had peanut butter on it, however, so the birds did not want it. But, hopping onto the deck was an old squirrel who trotted weakly over to the bread. Picking it up and holding it like a newspaper, the old squirrel began to lick the peanut butter off. The Mirabello family all thought this was adorable, but then my father saw the familiar slice in the ear. The old squirrel was Clippy. He looked weak, his muscles tired, his body battered by years of flying into walls, falling into decks, and ramming into feeders. Behind each of his ears, fuzzy patches of white hair were growing, like little cotton balls. But, as old as he looked, the squirrel was still powerful. You could see it in his eyes. The intelligence. The brilliance. Clippy had returned.

Instead of chasing his old enemy away, my father watched and smiled. It was as if he missed his old enemy. And a new habit was born. Everyday, the Mirabello family would put peanut butter on a slice of bread and place it on the deck for the aging squirrel to eat. And Clippy would wait on the deck. Even when man opened the door, he sat and waited. He transgressed the rules of animal kind and did not run in the face of man. He stood there and waited as the bread was placed in front of him. And he ate.

Sometimes, he would leap onto the window sill (an easy jump) and start scratching on the screen. He wanted us to know he was there and that he was hungry. I myself was reading in the living room once when I heard a knock. I turned around and looked at the glass door that led to the backyard. There was Clippy, knocking on the glass like a man.

Once Clippy poked his head inside the house when the door was open. The young Suzanne, the daughter of the lord of the house, screamed and ran around like a mad woman. Clippy skittered away and never tried to venture within the house again. This was not because he was scared. On the contrary, he was thinking only of the young girl.. After that, he stayed always a foot from the door when it was opened.

Clippy grew closer and closer to the family. He began to time his visits so that when he arrived, he could eat this meal with us, him on the deck, and we at the dinner

able. But, he would look in and watch and feel comfortable. As we left, he left.

The bond was especially strong between Clippy and my father. The two old enemies were growing old together and became companions. If someone was on the deck when Clippy was fed, he would bring his meal elsewhere. Unless, it was my father. They could sit together on that deck, calmly and happily. When Clippy knocked on the window, the man would cry out like a child on Christmas, "Clippy!" With the speed unparalleled by man, he would smear the bread with peanut butter and dash outside to be with his companion.

But, wait, friend. The story has another interesting note. I must share with you Clippy's greatest battle. Young upstart squirrels were migrating throughout the neighborhood, transplanting the old from their homes. Times were changing and there was much violence on the block as squirrel battled squirrel, young battled old. The aged were losing. A great battle was fought in the Mirabello backyard, one that included Clippy. I do not lie when I say that I looked out the window during these dark times and saw eight or nine squirrels flying across the backyard, flinging from trees and wildly lawing at each other. Tails were flickering with rage...and the battle was great. The old lost and fled. But, Clippy refused to leave.

One day, he crawled to the window and knocked. He was hungry. Robert Mirabello got him bread and went to the back door. Clippy met him there, looking weak and tired. One half of his clipped ear was hunching over meekly. His back had a great cut on it, a battle wound from one of the upstarts. It was healing well and looked clean, but the pain was bothering the once mighty squirrel. My father sadly gave him the bread and returned inside.

Suddenly, like lightning, they attacked! Two upstart squirrels leapt onto the deck, batting Clippy away like a doll and began to ravage the bread. Clippy's strength was failing and he retreated. Or did he?

Clippy's advantage was always his intelligence. I was sitting at the front porch on this day, and I suddenly saw a squirrel run from the backyard and fly by me, and turn to the backyard from the other side. With the wound on his back, it must have been a great struggle to run as he did, but the will and anger are motivaters beyond comparison.

It occurred like this. The upstarts charged Clippy who retreated. He ran around the house, returning to the backyard from the other side, passing me, and running for the unsuspecting interlopers. Suddenly, from behind the upstarts, the old rogue squirrel had time only to turn around before he was pummeled. It was like a train plowing into an automobile. The upstart squirrel rolled back and meekly stumbled away. Clippy returned to his bread, held it up like a newspaper and began to lick what was left of the peanut butter. Both halves of this clipped ear were standing tall, lush with pumping blood and adrenaline. You could see the fire of victory in his eyes. He was the old Beowulf battling the dragon, only unlike that Geat hero, Clippy survived the



"Pepe"

Ink on Paper

Erika Meredith

battle. His back healed. The upstarts never bothered him again.

But, that was the last great adventure of Clippy the Squirrel. For many months he continued to scrap on the window or knock on the door, and eat this dinner as we ate ours. But one day, he did not show up and we have not seen him since. We do not know where he went. We do not know why. But, I warn you, my friend, do not think him dead. He returned once. He may yet again. Just know that this squirrel was more clever than man, and fought man, defeated man, and found in his old age that he could live peacefully with man. He was not of squirrel kind. He rarely involved himself in their world. Instead, he found himself intrinsically linked to the affairs of man, and it was here that he made his home. He transgressed the rules of nature, you see, and he may yet again. Do not think him gone, he will return like Arthur from his Avalon...

# Family

A scarf and a hat where there had been  
Hair shining the color of Shenendoah  
leaves in fall

Linda made my mother promise  
Always to take care of them for her  
the boy a little younger than the girl.

But that is not my memory  
I only see  
my mother and Linda laughing  
under yellow plastic umbrella-shade  
Alternating sips of their piña-coladas  
with bites of the crusts, left over  
from our peanut butter sandwiches.

*Megan Sheils*



"Business Man" Oil and Wax on Canvas Becky Flynn

# Stockholm

Running mouth darting with  
insinuation & two bodies facing  
one another in oblivion-  
To these keys of joy of madness  
seeping in tonight  
I feel a force of hand  
penetrating from the open window  
face flushed burning & whatever  
else can be imagined here  
& I'm straight with this  
at least to myself, thinking  
I need to at least write everything down-  
Wide bright morning coming  
through this livid dreamscape  
& I believe in a heaven of small favors,  
smiles & that press of hand &  
I believe in this lunacy of music  
that breaks the air every night  
covering the haunting moans of lovers

*Chandra DasGupta*



# Should Have Worn Corduroy

Laughs, music, and the stench of cheap beer  
You spun  
You sang  
You poured out to him  
And I listened  
You kissed  
You danced  
And I listened  
He laughed  
He whispered  
He kept his heart in the back pocket of his jeans  
But they were at home  
Thrown over the back of a chair  
His heart Safely hidden

This morning he fills you up  
Dominated your thoughts  
You wonder  
You hope  
And he tries to remember your words, your name  
He hurts you  
He forgets you  
And I write you poetry  
I sigh  
I ache  
Last night I wore my favorite pair  
I know  
I checked  
It's gone

*Derek Coryell*

# Sleep Secrets

Observe sleep—  
and the crisp shrill ee  
tucked in between quilts of slippery gelatin sl and  
a p soft with lips closed  
like a lullaby  
(lips is a word very like sleep  
though wetter and fatter  
and a fruit warm like an overripe blueberry)  
Sleep, though,  
is a pear.  
Observe a dark juicy dreamless sleep—  
smileless and motionless—  
of him  
who  
lies

under crimson sheets and blankets  
his lips a small open pink ellipse—  
slowly he breathes in the darkened room  
sip it  
like a fine port

and savors the flavor in his throat.  
Breath comes in silent solemn ihs and ahs  
(not an ee to be heard in this room)—  
sleep pillows his breaths  
and wraps them like treasures  
in silk—they are sacred relics  
to adorn a temple.

I dreamed of him sleeping  
and it awoke me  
in a languorous slither.  
My own breaths came wrapped in chintz.  
(his, sometimes in miniver or velvet)

I remember every breath of his.

I keep them in a shrine, locked behind a golden door.

I lay in the darkness-fog  
and shivered,  
missing the sound of fruity pillow breathing  
trickling through eh silent warm thick darkness  
of crimson sheets  
and the hands that occasionally  
plucked fruit from my cheek.  
I missed it.

He sleeps the way a conch shell whispers an ocean,  
his secret wafting like orange tea  
from his lips  
all the way to my bed.

*Meg Weireter*



"Reaching" Colored Pencil on Paper Michael McMahon

## “me + her”

we sit shiny-eyed-pensive  
and talk smokily chat  
over java cups

(cracked porcelain style)

hers:black  
mine: sweet creamie.  
she is neat-  
i like her smooth mind  
and sensitive hands.  
quietly loud,  
she can soft step barefoot into my into my noisy phase  
and peace my heart:

(a slipped crunch multi-red leaf into my hair/a twizzler drooped to me as  
understanding)

the callouses on her hands tell her songs-

(she sings sky-down faith. she sings whisper-

breath hope.)

me + her

heavy-drenched with wanting to fly instead  
and we fascinate each other:

she dreams in alligators and crashes,

i write in blue hurt on soul-soaked paper.

i wonder if she knows that

i could be content as a maybe-poet

if she could always believe me a sure one

and i would be a crazy success.

she matches in my head

with to-be-taken photographs of her-

squishing dirt like juicy good fruit between her palms,

she says

“i can keep you whole”

(she says.)

laughily smiling teeth-ful into chilled days when the wind hurts,  
stooped, comforting, to a needful face - an "i know" in the hands that soothe,  
the mind that calms.

her + me

and we go together

with late nights of

stuff-forgotten-remembered because of trust

and candy to pacify the monsters we hide.

she touches her heart,

that is where she keeps her music,

she touches her heart-

"this is where i keep you whole,"

i like me better when she's around.

(i've noticed.)

we sit

as only confessioned-to-each-other-friends can

and through the smoke we comfortably exhale,

into each other's beings

we balloon fattly.

*Lydie Kane*

# Bathpoem.

What does a bubble keep inside of it?  
—I wonder, as my plump toes  
squirmily pop several of them  
(I can feel the bubble essence  
spilling over them like slippery vanilla sauce  
or come)—

and as my body slishes and squishes  
among the bubbles like a  
pink earthworm.

The tub encases the bubbles like a seashell.  
The bubbles encase the water like a skate's egg sac  
and the water encases me.

(the olive in the martini?)

I lie back and watch the bubbles pop,  
watch the elusive bubblemagic be freed  
to flit merrily far away,  
and I squirm and slide deeper into the hot wombtub  
wondering where all the shells and skins end  
and what I keep inside of me.

(the bubble in the champagne?)

*Meg Weireder*

# Letter

what shall I say?  
another summer will be  
miserable & that I can feel the  
heat's damp palm embracing me  
even now in this post-rain early evening.  
The night & I are young & tired  
in the midst of this oncoming vengeance,  
I can feel the torrents of nausea & sobbing racking  
even now & haven't even thought  
about your mouth in months,  
& this is always longer than I  
intended & expected & I debate to  
say if I really miss you  
but I will say that I can still feel you  
& maybe that's the same thing

*Chandra DasGupta*



Untitled

Oil on Luan

Heather Payne

## *Becoming my Mother*

It's in the way I pick fruit,  
in the way I smoke cigarettes and drink coffee straight through until afternoon,  
in the way I'll occasionally cook breakfast for dinner,  
It's in the way I love laundry and clean sinks and the hour when the house gets quiet.  
It's in the way I give out sound advice to girlfriends, while ignoring it myself.  
It's in the way I write letters long and full of daily details,  
and in the way I obsess over receiving nothing but the same.  
It's in the way I like the Stones and David Byrne and Ella,  
in the way I want to dance on Christmas morning,  
in the way I want kids, maybe even six, and to let them make their own way.

It's in the way I don't want to be comforted  
when I'm in a bad mood,  
in the way I make stories too choppy and trivial,  
in the way I repeat myself too often asking, "wait—did I already tell you this?"  
It's in the way I have hardened feet from barefoot days on beaches and blacktops and  
pine-needled yards, and in the way I have thirsty hands from soapy dishes or  
dirty bathroom floors or writing it all hastily down.  
It's in the way I'm thrifty in thrift shops but not when I'm out on the town.  
It's in the way I read to fall asleep but wake up three times to re-lock the doors.

It's in the way I have to procrastinate, make lists,  
pack snacks for long car rides though I'd really rather just stay at home.  
It's in the way that I'm bossy and brash, a wiseass, a tough one,  
a roll with the punches sort of girl.  
It's in the way I care most about a few things and much less about everything else,  
in the way that I can't hold a grudge, can't forget to remember,  
can't avoid what I'm becoming.

*Sarah McCall*



# Remembering Wynd

The afternoons here  
are like mornings - a boy passing  
mentions *Much Like London*.

I think of that picture of you,  
your thick chocolate hair  
horizontal in the clouded breeze.  
Stonehenge was colored  
in with blue, so small  
compared to you. You gave  
that picture to me the day  
before I rode off into the flaming  
north, my world prepared  
and packed in cardboard castles.

And I wonder where you are today.  
If you are still sitting on that ledge  
by your purple window, fingering  
the stars with wishes. Or painting  
your face for more plays I've never  
heard of, playing characters the cultured  
would recognize. Certainly  
you've given up your drive-thru diva  
routine and are about rich enough  
to buy a silver car, destroy  
your eggshell world, and follow me  
north. Or maybe you're still  
that ungainly fifth grade girl with glasses  
you refuse to wear, sitting on the swing  
reminding us that we're too old to be  
here. We should be stars  
with planes and men. I'll write,  
you'll act, and we'll move into an old  
English  
castle with stone sidewalks and rose  
trellises.

Maybe you've cut that cinnamon hair  
on a whim, as you did last March,  
so I could run my fingers through it  
but once, before skin. Maybe you're still  
the same girl I left, going through life  
as air through autumn limbs. But mostly  
I hope you've become so large  
that you've forgotten about me, and the  
swings,  
and perhaps even Stonehenge. Because  
you were too old for all that. And I,  
well I am just becoming  
too young.

*Erin Smith*

## byrdie

I.

her real name was \_\_\_\_\_,  
but they called her "byrdie"  
because when she was 5  
her father bought her a picture book of birds for christmas.  
she liked their colors  
and the way their wings spanned the pages.  
"don't you love that one, darling?"  
she sat with her legs tucked underneath  
he pointed to a cockatoo over her shoulder.  
"that one daddy,"  
she showed him her favorites:  
past the exotic and tropical ones,  
the last page -  
hummingbirds.  
she liked their smallness  
and believed they sang real songs with words.  
in her dreams,  
they came to her  
and perched on her ponytail.  
they beat their tiny wings against her hair  
when they wanted attention.  
delicate and fragile,  
they sang to her -  
pretty words in their songs -  
they whispered to her of princes and beauty,  
magic spells and rose petals.  
"what's this daddy?"  
she held up the little red note left with the package  
she found on her pillow when she came home from kindergarten.  
he took her hands and pulled her onto his feet -  
"you're my pretty girl"  
he read into her gentle blue eyes.  
the gift was a tracing pad and colored pencils -  
"to draw the hummingbirds in your book."  
he let his hand slide down the length of her hair.  
"my sweet byrdie."  
she'd never seen one before but always looked -  
"daddy, do hummingbirds live in new york?"  
he laughed, "byrdie"  
and told her that the man who would love her  
would buy her a hummingbird and a great big golden cage  
he hid his arms behind his back,  
made a quick shuffling movement -  
they reappeared as two tight balls held out to her.  
"pick one" -  
she placed a tenderly pudgy finger to her lips,  
made her eyes wide and chose the left one.

he opened it slowly  
revealing the shimmering silver foil of a hershey's kiss -  
"and the man who will love you will buy you these on valentine's day."

II  
at 9,  
her body changed before all the other girls in her class  
at night,  
she lay in bed on her back -  
palms pressed against her small hard breasts  
desperately trying to flatten them.  
a ritual -  
always ending in soreness and tears.  
she undressed in her bedroom before showering  
walking to the bathroom nude  
until the hot in her face throbbed in waves  
when her mother caught the flash of a strand of black hair  
from the corner of her eye  
she felt her arm pulse  
as her mother's nails threatened to dig further in to her skin,  
"you need to start wearing a robe,  
you're not a little girl anymore" -  
a strange voice hissed.  
from the bathroom door,  
she turned to see that her father had turned his back -  
and she remembered the hummingbirds.  
she kept the picture book in an old shoe box under her bed.  
she traced them on her comforter  
with a silent controlled mania  
on the foggy car windows,  
on the carpet,  
on the dinner table  
on her desk at school.  
not artistic -  
no one would ever guess what they were  
they looked like upside down bananas with legs and human hands for wings.  
a boy peered over her shoulder in math  
to catch her drawing one in her notebook.  
"what's that supposed to be?" - spat at her  
"a hummingbird"  
and the shame rushed in fast  
"it doesn't look like one!"  
he made fun of her in gym  
along with some other boys the chanting began,  
"byrdie's' got boobs!"  
it echoed and she went someplace far.

(the little red notes kept coming on valentine's day. she read on her own, "for my pretty  
byrdie")

### III

in her head a tunnel grew  
and it did not go sideways  
but up and down  
a long, dark pipe shape  
with sticky black walls.  
wide enough to fit a girl -  
not too fat  
but not thin either  
when she was 12,  
she slipped and fell in.  
it had something to do with the boys playing handball -  
they had mean eyes  
and fast, hurting words  
they watched her through the holes in the fence.  
she hated recess -  
she felt fat and uncomfortable in her skin.  
the boys called her ugly  
and told her that an old drunk man  
who smelled like piss  
was going to rape her.  
in the tunnel of her head,  
she sat closed  
at the bottom -  
a hummingbird in her lap.  
the pretty girls were at the top -  
they were the ones the boys touched,  
she wondered how they looked in the shower,  
knowing that even the water did pretty things to them -  
sliding off of their cool bodies in smooth adjectives.  
it splashed and made noisy irritating words off of hers.  
from the bottom,  
she watched them with eyes that wanted  
her head down  
and tried to move the way they did.  
she knew that she belonged at the bottom  
but hoped that she could be a "one" there -  
the one who if you took a picture of in black and white  
would have beautiful hair that made you remember rose petals -  
but in the tunnel,  
everything goes dark,  
there is no sound  
except for the pretty girls laughing,  
the boys shouting  
and a hummingbird cannot sing.

(the little red notes appeared on her pillow. she opened the bag of kisses, unwrapping each one. a pile for chocolate. one for foil. one for the flags. counting. she couldn't remember when her father stopped writing, "for my pretty" ...)

#### IV

In high school,  
the tunnel in her head narrowed  
and she felt the walls  
press against her arms  
holding her legs  
she rocked slowly  
twirling a strand of her hair and sticking it in her ear  
she watched the pretty girls at the top  
and they knew she stared with jealous eyes.  
she saw them with boys  
who wore baggy pants  
they were the boys who moved like marbles on a wooden floor  
and kept their hands hidden in their pockets -  
she thought of their black hands and where they had been on those fluid white bodies.  
“you will meet someone wonderful,”  
her mother told her  
one day when she asked why the boys didn’t like her.  
but she knew that was an excuse -  
it was because of how she ate with swollen hands  
and her body was too big and her eyes had not sex in them.  
the box with the picture book of birds  
was tattered now,  
and shredding at the corners.  
the page with the hummingbird had torn from the seam.  
she still drew them in her notebooks  
and a pretty girl had given her a picture of one for her locked  
she had cut it out of national geographic -  
but as she taped it to the inside,  
the tunnel getting smaller for a moment -  
she heard the pretty girl whisper  
“I gave that weird girl byrdie a hummingbird picture -  
i feel sorry for her  
and the guy that marries her -  
she’s crazy”  
she fell loudly  
and knew that there  
is where she had to stay.

(this time it was “to byrdie” only with a p.s. of “don’t eat all of them.” she unwrapped the  
kisses, foil down first, then flags, then the chocolate pile. she couldn’t remember when she stopped  
eating her kisses on valentine’s day)

#### V

he smelled like fast food and cigarettes.  
when she was 16,  
3 weeks before valentine’s day -  
she went to a dance  
wearing too tight clothes

and too much lipstick.  
a girl belonging to the bottom  
obviously trying to be a pretty girl  
she stood in a corner  
watching them grind against each other  
watching the boys who moved like marbles  
and their black hands  
slide up and down their bodies  
in time with the bass.  
she didn't see him come up behind her  
but felt the sweaty lips against her ear -  
"dance with me" -  
she turned to see black hands come out of pockets  
and wrap around her waist -  
something inside her dropped  
and fell heavy  
as his hands pushed her shirt up an inch  
he was on her skin.  
she moved with him,  
letting the smell of him and his touching  
go slowly in her head  
so she could be sure to remember -  
she saw herself sticking to the sides of the tunnel  
clinging, halfway to the top  
she let him feel her  
and press into her back -  
before it was over,  
he said "i'll call"  
and gave her a pen and a blank piece of paper to write down her number  
she did  
and told him her real name.

## VI

She called him her boyfriend  
and he did not call.  
and thought about his hands on her skin above her belt  
and telling him about how her father gave her a bag of hershey's kisses on valentine's day -  
she wondered if now he would be the one to give them to her.  
the phone rang on valentine's day  
and he told her to be there in an hour -  
he had a present for her.  
on the subway,  
she wondered if he would touch her skin again...  
outside  
was a dark empty place  
with buildings that looked like tight, closed people.  
it was dirty there  
and smelled like urine and fast food  
in front of his building  
the boys that moved like marbles stood in a group

watching her with their hands in their pockets  
and smiles like pointed fingers.  
he opened the door and was on her before she saw his hands.  
he led her to his bedroom  
and pushed her down onto a mattress stripped of the sheets  
on her back,  
she thought about him touching her  
and decided to.  
he would be the only one...  
his mouth open  
coming at her  
and the tunnel rushed back in.  
from the bottom,  
she looked out the window -  
hoping to see a hummingbird.  
instead  
rusted bars and a broken screen.  
he never said her name  
or gave her hershey's kisses for valentine's day  
she held her legs to herself in her head  
and was gone.

(they forgot this year. when she came home, instead of the little red note on her pillow with the candy,  
her mother had found her drawings of hummingbirds and left them scattered on the floor. "you're too  
old to keep doing this!" written across her favorite drawing)

VII  
they remembered the next day.  
when she came home from school  
she found the little red note  
"to byrdie -  
still a pretty girl"  
love dad.  
she sat on her bed in the tunnel  
and opened the bag.  
one pile for foil  
one pile for chocolate  
one for flags  
she counted  
thinking about the boy who did not make her feel pretty  
and waited for the hummingbirds.

*Lydie Kane*

# MINOR KEYS

Who you calling Minority?  
Me?? A minoriteeee?? I don't think so!  
Don't degrade me. I'm not minor in any way.  
*Cono*, I'm a Fighter, Writer,  
Lover, Hater, Sweetheart, Time Bomb,  
Brown, Proud, a little bit Loud, Learner, Earner,  
Thinker, No Stinker, Street Cool, No Fool,  
a Poet. I KNOW IT!!!  
Never call the children minor.  
If you call them minor, they'll act minor.  
If they act minor, they'll become minor.  
If they become minor, they'll die minor.  
If they die minor . . . THEY'RE LOST!!!  
A lost child. Think of the price!!!  
Like the wisdom my *amigo* Piri flows on me,  
I'm a majority of *uno*  
I take shit from no one.  
I'm second to none.  
That's it. I'm done.

*Warren Duffie Jr.*



Untitled

Oil and Wax on Canvas

Becky Flynn





"Campaign Wife"

Oil on Luan

Heather Payne

## *Down in my Sister's Basement*

My Sister hands me a Coke and a worn Afghan  
and we settle down  
content in her basement  
apartment as she pours over old  
adolescent journals.

I wrote this when I was your age, she says:  
“Sadly, you will never understand that  
I belong in black and white and you are so beautiful in color.”

At 13, I am bold and heady, my heart still safely in one piece so  
I beg her to keep reciting and give them all to me in some shiny  
new volumes to safeguard, like heirlooms  
Adorning the dusty shelves and cheap furniture  
that mother would hate - for each time we leave the place  
Mother reminds me of her preference to  
“floral patterns over thrifty mildew.”

But I like the taupe and orange couch that we're sitting on,  
complementing  
the crocheted throws, and glossy ceramic  
dancing figurines. Half-primed Christmas  
ornaments like abandoned children  
I wonder if she'll finish them on time.

Frames of every size and color cover the dark-paneled walls  
Flowers in black and white  
Come to life, I can imagine them in color.

I tell her  
She should sell the one of her by the ruins of Mexico  
because there's something about her face:  
Her eyes are wide and not squinting, her smile  
For once doesn't seem forced.  
Even mother likes it.

Next week my sister's starting law school.  
Mother claims she can finally sleep and  
I'm worried they'll be no more movie nights, or  
Late night talks, or new photographs  
and so is my sister.

So tonight she reads,  
saying there won't be much time  
for all this later  
so listen.

*Natalie Illum*

## The Necklace

You feel her hand brush across you  
Her fingers curl and close around you  
Lifting you up from the box  
Stretching you out over her hand  
Your links falling over  
As she takes you by your ends  
And places you around her neck  
Fastening your links  
As you become part of her

She places her hand over you  
As you lay against her warm skin  
Following along the curve of her neck  
Down to the depression between her breasts  
You lay against her smooth skin  
She looks at you in the mirror  
Reflecting the light of her blue eyes  
You shine forth  
She runs her hand through her blonde hair  
And pushes down her black dress  
As you and your mistress  
Slip through the door

*Jason Hickman*

# Charade

As the young couple,  
so young and so happy,  
ducked into the waiting car,  
I lowered the curtain  
and ended it all.

I'm the talk of the town  
and I never knew why.  
Perhaps because I ran  
instead of walked.  
Merrily, I went to Hell  
and as a result,  
I have lots of favorite wives.  
And I have room for one more.  
Of course, people will talk  
because they always do.

I'm the toast of New York  
but in name only.  
Ladies never listen to the awful  
truth that by the time  
the bartender ends the day  
I am on that stool,  
a drink in one hand,  
a cigarette in the other  
and these my only companions.

Was I indiscreet? Am I notorious?  
It made no difference. They wanted  
the charm. They wanted  
the wit. They wanted  
me and I gave  
myself to them.

I gave  
them my pride and I gave  
them my passion.

I gave them me.  
a devil in the deep  
and they have all left me  
to my soliloquy.

I have grave suspicion  
that he takes off his mask  
only to reveal the same beneath,  
a mask of such gray  
that I can't see the fading remains  
of the mixers, the black and white  
the night and day.

Where is the line? Where do I end  
and where does he begin?

Everybody wants  
to be Cary Grant.  
I want  
to be Cary Grant.

*James Mirabello*

## *Lounge Singer*

She wore blue  
velvet Bluer  
than velvet was  
she with a  
sad smile  
Rich red lips drawn  
down to me  
In the night black  
crept over her shoulders

I sat at a small  
table sat  
with gin and my lonely  
She didn't see  
me but I rewound and watched  
over and  
over

*Erika Meredith*



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